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AUTHOR Taylor, Myrtice Morgan
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ABSTRACT

The study was a descriptive field survey conducted to evaluate the services provided by the Division of Research Evaluation and Data Processing (REDP). An analysis was made to determine whether the information was used by the consumer for the same purposes for which the producers intended. An investigation was conducted to determine if a service was not used because the respondent was unaware of its existence, chose not to use it, or considered it untimely. A questionnaire was designed as an expedient method. It consisted of a section which elicited information about the respondent's present position, educational level, and years of experience in the Atlanta Public Schools. The major portion of the questionnaire requested information about the purposes for which the REDP information was used. The questionnaire was administered to the producers and consumers of the services. The usefulness of information provided is influenced by the value the user perceives of it. The interview technique would improve the quality of information and insight gained. The study concluded the REDP in Atlanta was meeting the needs of its consumers. Urban school systems should continue to seek methods of improving the use of information provided to clients. (DWH)

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DO THE CONSUMERS IN ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS USE THE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION INFORMATION FOR INTENDED PURPOSES AS PERCEIVED BY THE PRODUCERS

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Myrtice Morgan Taylor
Research Associate
Atlanta Public Schools

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York, March 19-23, 1982.

INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta Public School System, like the 27 other large city school systems in the Council of Great City Schools, has a unit responsible for evaluation activities within its organization. This unit has grown tremendously from less than 20 employees at its beginning in 1965 as the Division of Research and Development to more than 30 employees since its expansion in 1979 to Research, Evaluation and Data Processing.

The Division of Research, Evaluation and Data Processing (REDP) includes two departments (as its name implies): research and evaluation (R & E) and data processing (DP). The R & E Department is responsible for the evaluation of activities of programs/projects that are locally, state, and federally funded. The DP Department serves the systemwide needs for data processing in both the administrative and instructional areas. While the two departments are within the same division their functions are distinct with the DP Department providing the Data Processing services needed by R & E as it does to other users.

Evaluation, as viewed by the Atlanta Public Schools R & E units, fits closely the definition set forth by Stufflebeam (1968) that evaluation is the science of providing information for decision making. As this division carries out its responsibility for providing information, its focus in recent years has been directed toward the use of information by decision makers for systemwide purposes, by principals, and by teachers for individual purposes. The services on a systemwide basis are in the nature of evaluation of specific programs or of responsibilities, such as management of information and proposal writing. The service to schools is that which develops by having research assistants/associates assigned in a liaison relationship to each school to provide technical assistance. This assistance to schools includes the following activities:

1. Facilitating the implementation of the standardized testing program.
2. Assisting with test administration and interpretation and with the use of test data from both published and teacher-made tests.
3. Analyzing data, trends, conditions, and cause-and-effect relationships pertaining to instructional strategies and achievement in reading and mathematics.
4. Reviewing efforts and documentation associated with activities designed to accomplish the systemwide objectives.
5. Evaluating pupil achievement.

6. Identifying new questions for future evaluation based upon the original evaluation findings.

The technical assistance rendered to the schools is a means of providing linkage between the division and the schools to make evaluation relevant in the sense of assisting each school faculty in analyzing and diagnosing trends in and concerns regarding students' academic progress. Longitudinal data, relationships of instructional approach and achievement in reading and mathematics, disposition of previous recommendations for instructional improvement, and promising practices identified elsewhere within the system, as well as in other locations throughout the country, are studied extensively to locally design and develop strategies for improving instruction.

According to Stufflebeam (1980) in the urban school systems studied in the Urban Education Studies, linkage between evaluators and their clients was weak; but in recent years, improvements in this area have been notable. The Atlanta Public School System was cited as being one of the five urban school systems whose R & E unit is moving toward greater liaison with the schools. The purpose of such liaison is to provide opportunities for communication and collaboration between the division and the audience so that reports are specifically designed to meet the needs of the audience being served.

This liaison function is effected in the Atlanta Public Schools through the assignment of research assistants/associates to work with from one to nine schools. The research assistants/associates, in their liaison function with the schools, work very closely with the faculties in providing information and technical assistance needed to do a needs assessment prior to developing individual school plans for meeting the systemwide objective of improving student performance in reading and mathematics as measured by the California Achievement Tests (CAT) and to document the implementation of the plan.

Instructional leadership, decision making, and planning for the school's instructional program are the shared responsibility of the Leadership Team in the elementary schools and of the Program Improvement Council (PIC) in the middle and high schools. The research assistants/associates and resource teachers (staff personnel assigned by the area offices to provide instructional assistance to the schools) work cooperatively and closely with the leadership team. Often, weekly meetings are means by which the research assistants/associates present materials and information and interact with the staff.

In summary, the Division's services to the schools are primarily to facilitate the use of information about students and programs to further academic progress. Information is disseminated, and the research assistants/associates work with school faculties; however, there is no formal documentation of how widespread is the knowledge teachers have about

the R & E services that are available or whether or not the information is usable for the purposes for which it is intended or needed. Thus, the concern of the writer is to determine to what extent principals and teachers use the research and evaluation information which is provided and for what purposes the information is used.

Statement of the Problem

The increased emphasis among professional educational evaluation researchers and the general concerns of the public for improving educational opportunities for students suggest that school systems must be able to answer the question, "What is being done to ensure that students are receiving a quality education?" In response, R & E units in school systems will continue to move toward the analysis of existing data and toward systematically collecting more data and providing services that will aid in using the resulting information to make appropriate decisions to effect improved academic achievement.

Supporting and promoting continued improvement of academic achievement and school management is a major goal of the Atlanta Public School System's Division of REDP. Thus, the problem addressed in this study is that of determining if the information provided to personnel who are directly responsible for instruction (teachers and principals) meets their needs. A tremendous amount of information is disseminated through the services of the Division of REDP; however, the extent to which the information is used and the purposes for which it is used is not sufficiently documented. There are basic questions which need answers if the Division is to improve its services to the schools and facilitate utilization of information: Are principals and teachers aware that the services exist; that is, do they receive the information? Is the information timely? Does the information meet the decision-making needs of teachers and principals? Do the users' views regarding the purposes of R & E information correspond to the views of the producers of the R & E information?

Answers to these questions will facilitate the linkage between production of information and the use of information, thus serving as a guide for R & E activities.

Educational Significance

Beginning in the middle sixties and continuing through the past decade, evaluation units in urban school districts have grown in size and importance. Webster and Stufflebeam (1978) grouped research and evaluation units into three categories: large (more than $1,000,000 in research, evaluation, and testing expenditures), medium ($300,000 to $999,000 in research, evaluation, and testing expenditures), and small

($50,000 to $299,000 in research, evaluation, and testing expenditures). In 1978, these authors identified 9 districts as having large, 13 districts as having medium, and 13 districts as having small R & E units. The R & E unit of the Atlanta Public Schools was included among the listing of large units because of its budget of approximately $1,000,000. The Atlanta Board of Education's strong support for the Division is evidenced by the fact that 47 percent of the budget comes from local funds.

Since the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing of the Atlanta Public School System, like research and evaluation units across the nation, is concerned with the use of information emanating from its services, an assessment of whether such information is being used and for what purposes is warranted. Knowing whether and for what purposes research and evaluation information is used by teachers and principals will enable the Division to improve its functions by exploring and emphasizing potential use of some information and making appropriate modifications regarding other services.

Teachers and principals are the personnel in direct contact with students. If the use of research and evaluation data is to impact instruction, R & E units must provide to teachers and principals the types of information they need, and they must facilitate the optimum use of research and evaluation data. The findings from this study will point the direction for research and evaluation services locally and provide implications which could have regional and national significance.

Limitations

The Division of REDP performs a dual role which is designed to improve student academic achievement and school management within the Atlanta Public School System. It provides services and information (1) to systemwide and area staffs for decision-making purposes which affect systemwide or specific administrative-area programs and for planning, writing, or adapting/adopting curriculum and/or curriculum changes and (2) to school personnel (principals and teachers) for purposes of making decisions about the instructional program and of determining the most appropriate teaching strategies, including consideration of grouping students for instruction and meeting teacher and student needs.

Analyses are needed of how each level of the school system uses the research and evaluation services and information. This study, however, will focus on the personnel in the schools where the use of research and evaluation services and information can more directly influence the instructional process. Identification of the services and information most often used by teachers and principals and the purposes for which they are used will contribute greatly to the school system's efforts to improve the use of research and evaluation to promote student academic achievement.

This study is further limited by the fact that the sample was drawn from only the Atlanta Public School System. Consequently, the findings relate primarily to this school system and are not generalizable.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The rise of research and evaluation units in school systems is credited to the increase in federal funding which occurred in the mid 1960's. The focus of school systems' research and evaluation activities is directed more toward evaluation of programs than basic and applied research. Mainly, the cost of basic and applied research along with the risk involved in producing desired results (that is, specific answers to problems) is prohibitive for school systems. Furthermore, product evaluations, with limited research efforts, tend to meet most nearly the needs of school systems, at least to the extent to which boards of education are willing to finance such activities.

Research and evaluation are both inquiry activities that use systematic inquiry techniques but for different purposes — research to produce new knowledge and evaluation to judge worth or social utility. The overlap between research and evaluation makes it difficult to identify clearly some activities as being solely in either category (Worthen & Sanders, 1973).

School systems generally make little distinction between research and evaluation; the terms are used jointly/interchangeably in reference to a unit that generates information about students and programs. This lack of clear distinction between research and evaluation is not uncommon. Even though they defined some terms to serve as a point of departure for their text, Worthen and Sanders contended that research and evaluation along with development and diffusion are "hypothetical constructs for disposition of persons to respond with certain words in the presence of certain instances of the production or utilization of knowledge."

By design and functions, R & E units are responsible for evaluation activities. Evaluation as carried out by R & E units in school systems is characterized by varied schools of thought regarding a definition. Some activities would seem more related to educational measurement evaluation as defined by Thondike and Hagen (1969). Other activities are related to professional judgment wherein, like school and university accreditation procedures, judgments are based on expert opinions. Still other activities, at times, are related to the definition which emerged with Ralph Tyler's work (1942) on

the Eight Year Study of the 1930's — comparing performance data with clearly specified objectives.

The definitions of evaluation which have emerged in the last decade seem most appropriate for describing or guiding the functions or purposes of school systems' R & E units. The writings of Stake (1967); Provus (1969); and Stufflebeam, Foley, Gephart, Guba, Hammond, Merriman, and Provus (1971) present the current view of evaluation as a process of identifying and collecting information to assist decision makers in determining the available alternatives and in choosing the best one from among those available.

The institutionalization of research and evaluation activities within urban school systems historically has served primarily to provide to boards of education and administrators answers to questions regarding "what is happening in schools, what programs are working, and whom the programs are serving." As the level of efficiency of school systems' research and evaluation units and the sophistication of the public have increased, the administrators and boards of education are needing answers to the questions: "Where do we go from here? What is going on in the schools? How can schools use information to best meet their needs?" The use of research and evaluation information aids school administrators in bringing about change and in improving the educational opportunities provided for students.

Functions of Research and Evaluation Units

Based upon information collected through a survey of 60 of the largest school systems in the United States, Webster and Stufflebeam (1978) outlined, as follows, 14 functions of school systems' research and evalution units.

1. Management — the obtaining, disbursing, and quality control of material and personnel resources necessary to meet the information needs of the district.
2. Testing — the operation of the basic data acquisition system in such a manner as to ensure reliable, valid, and objective instrumentation and reporting.
3. Instrument development — the development and validation of necessary instrumentation.
4. Context evaluation — the provision of baseline information that delineates the environment of interest, describes desired and actual outcomes, identifies unmet needs and unused opportunities, and diagnoses problems that prevent needs from being met.
5. Input evaluation — the provision of information for determining optimum methods of resource utilization for accomplishing set goals.

6. Process evaluation — the provision of information for determining defects in procedural design or implementation during program implementation stages and for aiding in the interpretation of program evaluation data.

7. Product evaluation — the provision of information for determining the relative success of educational programs. Product evaluation may be interim or summative and generally addresses the extent to which programs meet their objectives, the relative effects of alternative programs, and/or program cost-effectiveness.

8. Applied research — the provision of information pertaining to interactions between student characteristics, teacher characteristics, and/or instructional strategies.

9. Basic research — the provision of information pertaining to fundamental relationships affecting student learning.

10. Data processing — the operation of the basic data retrieval and analysis system.

11. Planning services — the provision of technical assistance to district and project management in planning and managing projects and programs.

12. Ad hoc information — the provision of requested information on an ad hoc basis to decision makers.

13. Research consultation — the provision of design and analysis help to district personnel in implementing their own research and evaluation projects.

14. Proposal development — the development of proposals, or the evaluation sections of proposals, for outside funds. In all cases, outside funds should be a means to an end, not an end in themselves.

Information gathered through the Urban Education Studies directed by Chase (1979) revealed that the functions mentioned above were common among the 16 school systems which participated in those studies.

Utilization of Research and Evaluation Information

The literature regarding school system R & E units, the types of information they provide, and the purposes for which such information is used is rather scarce. The literature regarding the practical application of school system research and evaluation is all but nonexistent. Most of the literature which dealt with school system research and evaluation was in the form of papers presented at various annual meetings of the

American Educational Research Association (AERA) and educational research and evaluation principles which can be implied from research and evaluation, in general.

A review of the literature revealed that the generally intended purpose of R & E units is to contribute to instructional improvement. The quality of this contribution is directly related to the extent to and purposes for which the information is used. The research and evaluation information is provided for the schools specifically to assist the teachers and principals in making decisions about grouping students, instructional techniques, and general organization of the school program, as well as maintaining a favorable public image.

Evaluative inquiry should contribute needed information to the process of making decisions about what to teach and how to teach it based upon how children learn (Cooley & Lohnes, 1976). Evaluation is necessary. Clear evaluation results can eliminate vagueness in assessing the degree to which goals and objectives have been achieved. Principals and teachers agree that people have the right to know what is going on in the schools. Evaluation leads to the determination of positive directions for the school program. It is a system responsible for both assessing the pertinent features in and around a school program and generating alternatives to improve it (Erlandson, 1973).

Teachers and principals are the school personnel who are directly responsible for the delivery of instruction. Principals play a crucial role in providing the leadership and organizational climate for the instructional program, while teachers provide the actual instruction for pupils. Making decisions regarding the instructional program, fostering community relations, and grouping students in the school are among the duties of the principal and the teacher. Specifically, a major concern of the teacher and the principal is when and how the broad goals and objectives of the school system will be implemented at the local school level. A significant question is: Do teachers and principals rely upon educational research and evaluation as a base for defendable decision making?

Fillos and Bailey (1978) reported that an investigation conducted by the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Delaware among Delaware public school administrators found that superintendents are generalists and are seldom in the position to make decisions based on "fine points" provided by educational research data. The findings of that study further indicated that seldom does existing research fit the specific needs of superintendents on detailed questions of daily operations, and supervisors, directors, or principals are probably the primary contacts for research adaptation. Fillos and Bailey speculated that teachers generally do not focus on research. Does this imply that teachers do not use information that is relevant to the local situation?

The number of decisions a teacher makes within the confine of the classroom is considerable. How to group students for effective instruction, what skills the child has mastered, what skills must be presented when and at what rate are but a few of the decisions that the teacher must make. These decisions are affected by the number of students assigned and their levels of performance. The assignment of students to specific teachers and grades and the many other instructional decisions made by both teachers and principals are based upon the information available about students.

According to Howery and Kean (1970), children's gains in basic skills and knowledge, how they feel, what they value, and how they behave are all affected by the decisions their teachers make. The teachers rely strongly upon their own experiences, the experiences of others, the opinions of others, and sometimes research findings. The teachers most often use themselves as the primary referent in making decisions in the interactive classroom situation and even in long-range planning.

When faced with a problem, the teachers frequently are guided by their own interests and capabilities. While some decisions are made on the basis of information or experience, some decisions are the results of educated guesses. The services provided through R & E units are intended to provide information that would minimize the number of decisions teachers would have to make on the basis of educated guesses. Howery & Kean further acknowledged that research findings cannot and should not be the primary source of data for much of the teachers' decision making; however, these data certainly should be used when available.

Use of available data is dependent upon how well it is accepted by the clients and how extensively it is viewed as being relevant to the clients' needs. More and more, the trend in school system R & E units is toward providing services to schools rather than selling the schools on a product which should be implemented in their programs. Through services to schools, R & E units attempt to provide the linkage between the production and dissemination of data and the use of data. Banks, Suidman and Pitts (1979), following this trend of thought, suggested that evaluators should possess skills that would enable them to be "information linkers," "program facilitators," and "process enablers." Along this same line of thought, Chin and Downey (1973) asserted that research and development organizations must, in addition to providing information, develop structures through which knowledge can be used to improve instruction. Developing such structures and/or providing the linkage between the production and dissemination of information and the utilization of information are charges currently facing R & E units in school systems.

In the school systems studied in the Urban Education Studies, Stufflebeam (1980) described the linkage between evaluators and their clients as being weak. He noted a few exceptions and the fact that the trend was in the direction of strengthening such linkage. He further encouraged school administrators, board members, and evaluators to consider what linkages are necessary to make evaluation relevant and responsive to clients and to study, alternative strategies for effecting such collaborative relationships. According to Stufflebeam, Atlanta, Dallas, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Philadelphia have made apparent improvements in this area.

The use of research and evaluation information often is facilitated by need. That is, as teachers and principals become aware of how such information can be used to help them do a specific job better, they will use that information which is available. Baine (1974) related in an AERA paper how the need for information that would enable her to know which reading subskill students needed to learn led to the use of mastery tests. Specific as it is, teacher acceptance of the concept of using research and evaluation information to start students appropriately where they are and move them forward, "turn informational feedback into pupil progress," is a major charge to R & E units.

Other authors in the literature on the use of research and evaluation information focused their discussions of knowledge production and actual practice in schools on the points of possible pitfalls and suggestions for avoiding them. Deal (1979) suggested that understanding of an educational R & E organization's work should guide linking activities between knowledge production and actual practice. Caution is raised on the basis that while knowledge utilization provides legitimacy to existing programs, new enthusiasm, new beliefs, and an improved public image for the schools, it may also undermine existing relationships within schools or between schools and the outside environment.

Aronson and Sherwood (1967) shared the notion that close cooperation among the researchers, the program designers, and the practitioners is a must to ensure success in evaluation — the production and utilization of knowledge. Failure to convince the practitioners that what was evaluated was the impact of the program and not their ability or competence in implementing the program is building tension between researchers and practitioners. Such an uncomfortable relationship often negates the use of whatever information results from the evaluation.

Seeley (1979) described teaching as the heart of education and purported that the most important thing a principal must do is help to improve the performance of teaching as the pressure mounts for schools to be educationally effective. To be effective, according to Seeley, the principal must be fully aware of the information available

regarding students and activities within the local school site because one of the major purposes of information from research and evaluation is to improve instruction. If the principal is unaware of the information which is available or does not use it, then making appropriate decisions regarding assigning students, designing activities, and assisting teachers is inhibited.

A review of the literature supports the proposition that R & E units within school systems do not focus heavily upon pure research activities. The historical development or creation of such units influenced their direction. In their beginning, R & E units were developed by superintendents to survey conditions within the district and provide them with information that would serve as a means of defense against external criticisms. McGranahan (1978) contended that because of the demands placed on R & E units by superintendents, they were the most directly served clients. According to McGranahan, service to all clients is shaped by the demands of the most direct clients. Mosher (1966) found that with the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, research and evaluation units experienced some change in focus. Their growth was somewhat explosive with the new demands for evaluation of programs; thus, the acquisition of new clients, federal and state agencies. However, the administrative demands of superintendents were retained, and the federal and state mandates added responsibility. Mosher asserted that in the mid-sixties teachers and other instructional personnel placed very few demands (or even requests) on R & E units for service and the data-collection activities of early years met the externally imposed requirements of federal and state agencies. Consequently, during the mid-sixties, data-collection activities were expanded, but not really changed. The demands of users came through in the literature as having significant affect upon the services provided by R & E units.

Studies regarding the specific teacher demands or requests or use of information from research and evaluation services are very limited. There is a trend in recent years, however, for the focus of R & E units to become more involved in systematic program evaluation than was evident in the mid-sixties when, for the most part, the focus was the collection of data. This fact has drawn many authors toward clarification of the concept of evaluation.

Hayman and Napier (1975) described evaluation as a total school concept. Evaluation provides feedback at any level of the educational system in which goals are compared to outcome. Evaluation should be related to all aspects of the learning process. Evaluation data should provide information for adjusting and, whenever possible, for facilitating the educational process. A traditional "Evaluation Mentality" views evaluation as a series of

beginnings and endings, in which the major outcomes of school are somewhat quantifiable and packaged in forms of grades, reports, or other product measures. A "Process Mentality" assumes a range of conditions that are met in only a few schools but that are quite possible to reach. These conditions included the following:

1. The information derived from the evaluation should be descriptive and useful to the recipient.
2. The information is useless unless it is specific, clear, and supported with examples.
3. Data collected in the process of an evaluation should be used immediately or as near to the actual event as possible.
4. Evaluative data should not be used to punish or manipulate.
5. A climate should be cultivated in which participants seek data feedback as part of a natural inquiry process.
6. Individuals are capable of using only a limited amount of data feedback at any one time. Care should be taken to feed to each user only information relevant to his roles.
7. The opportunity to act on the available data should be present which assumes some involvement and potency on the part of the recipient.
8. There should always be some degree of reciprocity between the giver and the receiver of evaluative data.

The constructive use of evaluation data can be ensured only when clear views of concepts are shared by all levels of the educational system. Evaluation must be seen as cutting across the entire learning spectrum. It cannot be confined solely to measuring performance on intellectual task, program curriculum development, or teacher performance. It assumes an educational climate that:

1. Seeks to foster communication among peers and subordinates involved in shared problems and the collaborative solution of them.
2. Seeks to reduce the defensiveness among various levels of the educational system.
3. Seeks to facilitate a climate for natural change and growth in the organization.
4. Seeks to encourage self-appraisal and personal development in both academic and nonacademic pursuits.

Evaluation should be designed to provide information to effect change. However, for change to occur, the relationship between program personnel and evaluators must be clearly defined and agreed upon by all of the organization's members who may be affected by the evaluation. Traditionally, school systems are monolithic, hierarchical, and monopolistic and, as such, are relatively insensitive to change. If change is to occur, Provus (1969), further asserted it must be due either:

> . . . to explosive force or to internally directed, gradual force: a delicately balanced movement that produces within the members of the organization, first uncertainty, then an awareness of discrepancy, self-appraisal, a readiness for change, a commitment to change, and ultimately the satisfaction of actualization and self-realization.

Estes (1977) charged educators to use the Research and Development (R & D) approach to help direct changes in the instructional program. Estes likened the making of decisions without the systematic approach of R & D to making decisions on a "flying blind" basis. According to Estes, through the use of the ordered series of steps employed by R & D, to identify and solve problems six things are done:

1. Needs are assessed.
2. Priorities are set.
3. Goals are charted.
4. Programs are planned.
5. Programs are evaluated.
6. Based on results, programs are eliminated, improved, or expanded.

A contrasting point of view to that of Estes was presented by Williams (1979). Williams viewed evaluations by school district R & E units as having minimal impact because they do not meet the realities of school district decision making. To maximize utilization of their findings, he asserted that district evaluation units should put less emphasis on producing reports for district consumption and stress working with small units — principals, teachers, and project directors — to design, implement, and report evaluations. Other suggested ways of improving the use of evaluation reports included (1) holding conferences for evaluators, clients, and external funders and (2) conducting independent evaluations of each report and eliminating those reports which serve no useful purpose.

Howard (1972), in a speech delivered at an annual meeting of the AERA, described the services of an evaluation department as ideally being those services which delineate, obtain, and disseminate information useful for making educational decisions.

Ashburn (1971) sought to understand the university-based researcher's job in training, research, development, disssemination, and evaluation (RDD & E) personnel through the experiences and staffing needs of the Dallas Independent School District.

Ashburn reported three factors that formed the setting of the school district's staffing effort as follows:

1. The constraint of available fiscal resource.
2. The constraint of priority on use of in-district personnel.
3. The need for field-oriented RDD & E personnel.

Based on the belief that training of professionals to support RDD & E activities was one of the most important functions of university-based researchers to deal with the rising need for RDD & E staff, the challenge suggested three approaches: (1) pursue the design and implementation of RDD & E training programs heavily weighted with field-training experiences, (2) develop RDD & E training programs at the undergraduate and master's degree levels instead of heavily concentrated in the terminal degree programs, and (3) develop a modular training system especially for in-service personnel.

Limitations of the Literature

The literature is limited to the extent that no studies were found which dealt with how teachers, as clients, actually used information disseminated from R & E units. The Urban Education Studies (Chase, 1979) and the Mosher study (1966) stood out as beginning attempts to examine the impact of school district R & E units on instruction. Most of the literature dealt with functions or purposes of R & E units (Webster & Stufflebeam, 1978), relationship of client demands to functions of R & E units (McGranahan, 1978), problems with linking evaluation and program improvement (Banks, 1979), and descriptions of R & E units (Estes, 1977) based on specific local districts and theory of evaluation. In general, the descriptive survey methodology was used to gather information across school districts or within a school district. In only one instance (Chase, 1979), a questionnaire was developed and mailed to a 10 percent random sample of teachers, principals, and project directors of each participating school district prior to a site visit by a team of administrators.

Comparisons made among districts were only in terms of size of districts and expenditures, with no consideration given to how information was used. Webster and Stufflebeam (1978) grouped research and evaluation units into three categories — large, medium, and small — on the basis of research, evaluation, and testing expenditures. Hurt (1978) studied data from 4,400 grant and contract projects funded by 34 federal agencies to determine the percent of the funds which school districts spent for educational research, development, demonstration, and evaluation. Other studies, such as the one done by Ashburn (1971), examined training needs by studying a single district.

PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

General Statement

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the worth of specific services provided by the division in terms of their usefulness as perceived by the consumers of the information in the schools and by research personnel who are the producers of the information.

The study included an analysis of whether the purposes for which the information was used by the consumers corresponded to the purposes for which the producers intended it to be used.

The study further included an investigation of why certain services were not used to determine if the respondent (1) was unaware of the service, (2) was aware of the service but chose not use it, or (3) considered the service untimely.

In this chapter, the writer discusses the questions studied and certain operational definitions, describes the subjects in the sample and their responses. provides a description of the questionnaire and its development, discusses the procedures used to conduct this study and to collect the data, and gives a description of the statistical techniques used to analyze the data.

Questions Studied

This study was a descriptive field survey with the overall objective of providing answers to the following questions which guided the conduct of this research.

1. For what purposes did the consumers use the information disseminated from the services provided by REDP?

   Availability, reliability, credibility, and utility are conditions which govern the use of evaluative data (Lee, 1979). The assignment of research

assistants/associates in a liaison relationship with the school is intended to provide the assistance needed to aid faculties in interpretation and utilization of information. Further, this direct contact with schools is intended to make information available on a timely basis while assuring staffs of the credibility and the reliability of information.

2. Did the purposes for which the consumers used the information correspond to the purposes for which the producers intended it to be used?

   Separate, specific evaluation reports with information and recommendations are provided to the school faculties, evaluation findings are used as the basis for in-service training sessions, and assistance is provided to teachers and principals in formulating new questions for future evaluation based upon the original evaluation findings. According to Owens (1968), these procedures are among the major ways of assisting decision makers in utilizing evaluation information.

3. Which items of information did the consumers use most often and for what purposes?

   The purpose of evaluation is to report summary data that are useful to decision makers in selecting among alternatives (Alkin, 1969). Teachers and principals are the decision makers in the school. They must choose among alternatives of what to teach to whom, when, and how. The specific instructional decisions that teachers and principals make are related to subject content, organization, and methodology. The information provided is intended to meet the decision-making needs of teachers and principals; if it is not used, it is important to know why.

   The apparent nonuse of evaluation findings is a prevalent problem associated with the practice of evaluation in the public school setting. Among the possible explanations for why it is difficult to document a direct correspondence between evaluation results and decisions, Novak (1977) cited that evaluators do not devote enough time and effort to trying to build in potential audiences a readiness for the evaluation results. Readiness for evaluation results would include a clear understanding of the functions of the R & E unit so as to know what to expect from the efforts of evaluators.

Operational Definition of Terms

Leadership Team — The group in each elementary school that serves as the cadre leadership to provide instructional leadership, make decisions, and plan strategies for the

school's instructional program. This group includes the principal, media specialist, instructional level chairpersons, a teacher representative from each program in the school, and a parent.

Research Assistant/Associate — A certified, professional position within the Atlanta Public School System's Division of REDP. Associate is a higher salaried classification than assistant and denotes administrative responsibilities. Basically, the associates are responsible for directing the testing and proposal writing programs, comparability, research, and evaluation activities, and the supervision of research assistants and support personnel. Assistants serve as facilitators and coordinators in determining the most effective monitoring, evaluation, and developmental procedures and utilization of information and data toward the accomplishment of the objectives of the division and school system.

School Report — An annual publication of salient characteristics of each school. This publication includes a general description of grade arrargement, enrollment, and staff; a profile of longitudinal test results; a discussion of related school factors such as parent-teacher interaction, faculty's opinion of progress, actions taken on the recommendations from the previous year, implementation of special or compensatory projects; and conclusions and recommendations relative to the current year.

Sample

The certified research personnel within the Division of REDP and the elementary school principals and teachers were selected as the population. The certified research personnel were selected because they were the producers of the information and the providers of the services. Elementary school principals and teachers were selected because they were more familiar with R & E information and its utilization than personnel in the middle and high schools. Prior to 1973, research assistants/associates were assigned only to those schools in which federal projects were in operation. Since most of the federal projects were in elementary and middle schools, assignment to high schools was very limited. By design of the testing program and assignment of special projects, elementary schools have received more concentrated services and have had a liaison relationship with REDP over a longer period of time than middle and high schools.

There were 21 certified personnel within the division. Two members participated in refining and validating the instrument. They along with the writer were excluded from the sample which made 18 the sample size of research personnel.

The principals and teachers of a random sample of 23 elementary schools were selected from among 93 of the 95 elementary schools. Two elementary schools were excluded because the principals and teachers participated in the pilot study to validate the instrument. These schools were selected on the basis of a random number generating feature of "A Programming Language" (APL). While it was desirable to include all schools in this study, the sizes of faculties would have yielded unwieldy data. Consequently, using Kerlinger's (1973) rough and ready rule "use as large samples as possible" and controlling for bias in the sense that no member of the population had any more chance of being selected than any other member, a 25 percent sample was drawn at random.

The enrollment data in the October 1980 Superintendent's Report were used to determine the number of questionnaires to send to each of the 23 selected schools. One questionnaire was sent to each regular classroom teacher and the principal of each school. A total of 343 questionnaires. 23 for principals and 320 for teachers were mailed to the 23 schools.

Shown in Table 1 is the percent of return of questionnaires. All completed questionnaires from the research personnel were returned in usable form. Of the 19 questionnaires returned by the principals, 15 were usable yielding a 65 percent response rate. The response rate for teachers was 76 percent based on the 226 usable questionnaires.

TABLE 1

PERCENT OF RETURNS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Group	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percent	Number Usable	Percent
Research Personnel	18	18	100.0	18	100.0
Principals	23	19	83.0	15	65.0
Teachers	320	255	80.0	226*	76.0
Totals	361	292	81.0	259	76.0

*153 teachers had served on leadership teams.

73 teachers had never served on leadership teams.

Questionnaires Rejected

Some returned questionnaires were rejected because of missing responses, double responses in items for which only one response should have been given and cases where it seemed obvious that the respondent had checked items using a pattern of response rather than reflecting on the answers to the questions.

Development of Instrument

The researcher designed the questionnaire specifically for use in this study. Two forms, A for producers and B for consumers, were used. (See Appendix A.) The procedures used to design the instrument were the following:

1. A list of all services which the division provided to the schools and a list of tasks that principals and teachers completed or uses they had for data were compiled. These items were generated from lists of services which the research personnel supplied by activities which they conducted in their assigned schools; from the knowledge which the researcher gained from 14 years of experience as a teacher, three years of experience as a research assistant, and seven years of experience as a research associate during which time she served for three years as a member of the Urban Education Studies site-visit teams; and from discussions with principals, teachers, area resource teachers, subject coordinators, and research personnel.

2. The list of items was compiled and distributed to research assistants and associates for their assessment of item appropriateness and clarity. Following modification, addition, or deletion of some items by this group of experts, the list was further scrutinized by a group of two research assistants and the researcher for further modification, addition, or deletion of items.

3. The questionnaire was field tested by administering it to a group of teachers and principals in two schools which were randomly selected for the pilot study.

4. The data from the completed questionnaires were compiled. A group of two research assistants and the researcher reviewed the data, item by item, to determine if the responses reflected valid information and if the responses discriminated among items.

In the opinion of the researcher and the research assistants/associates within the Division of REDP, the items on the final questionnaire were descriptive of services provided by the Division. The items were broad and explicit enough to address key services and purposes for which the information acquired from the services were used.

The pilot study sample of two schools for the field test were selected randomly using the same procedure used to select the large sample. A total of 41 regular classroom teachers and the two principals comprised the sample for the pilot study. Each participant completed a questionnaire which was hand delivered by the researcher.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: The items in Part I elicited information about the respondent's present position, educational level, and years of experience in the Atlanta Public Schools. The items in Part II comprised the major portion of the questionnaire and requested information about the purposes for which the information from the R & E unit was used.

Twenty-five services were listed, as follows:

1. Publish annual school report which reflects opinion of faculty regarding faculty and student progress of the past year and reports other data.
2. Provide a listing of students eligible for participating in special projects.
3. Provide literature searches regarding special interests.
4. Evaluate effectiveness of such programs as math, reading, and composition.
5. Evaluate special activities and projects.
6. Assist faculty in developing school plan for achieving system-wide objective plan.
7. Report accomplishment of activities identified in the school's objective plan.
8. Assist faculty in developing procedures for assessing needs regarding instructional implementation of reading and math components.
9. Explain federal, state, and foundation guidelines for special projects.
10. Provide staff development to promote better utilization of data and findings.
11. Involve members of faculty in implementing system-wide research/evaluation projects.
12. Assist faculty with developing parental involvement activities.
13. Assist faculty in determining areas of instructional weakness and in designing appropriate plans to stregthen those areas.
14. Help faculty with using an instructional management system.
15. Assist faculty in projecting academic achievement gain for the year.
16. Assist faculty in designing mini-studies to explore the implications of data trends.

17. Suggest instruments for diagnosing students' instructional needs.

18. Provide longitudinal test daa on pupils.

19. Provide test scores for students new to the school.

20. Aid faculty in designing teacher-made tests.

21. Conduct faculty workshops on test-taking skills.

22. Assist individual teachers in determining appropriate test level assignments.

23. Provide information regarding proper testing procedures.

24. Analyze and interpret test results.

25. Provide practice test materials.

For each of the 25 services the respondent could choose any number of the seven possible purposes of use:

01. Assign students: The information was used to assign students to grade levels, sections within grades, compensatory programs, and/or special classes, etc.

02. Group students: The information was used to group students within classes, etc. for instructional purposes.

03. Sets goals and objectives: The information was used to set goals and objectives for the school, design school program, and design an objective plan for the school as well as for individual teachers.

04. Assess instructional needs: The information was used to determine if teaching objectives were met and/or means for improving instructional strategies.

05. Improve student performance: The information was used to determine students' academic progress, identify areas of weaknesses, improve test-taking skills, and/or identify and meet individual instructional needs.

06. Update ideas/strategies: The information was used to become more acquainted with a particular subject, to learn new ideas and/or to refine strategies to do a more effective job.

07. Communicate with parents: The information was used to inform parents about the school program and overall progress, to discuss students' academic progress, and/or acquaint them with ways of helping their children.

Space was provided on the questionnaire for respondents to write in purposes for which information was used. If the consumer respondent did not use the information

generated from a service, three possible responses were given from which the one which best reflected the opinion of the respondent was to be selected. Those possible responses were as follows:

08. Unaware: Did not know the service was available.

09. Aware/did not use: Aware of service but did not use the information.

10. Untimely: The information was received too late for immediate use.

Form A for research personnel differed from Form B which was administered to the school personnel in two ways: In Part I, the item dealing with position was irrelevant and was deleted. In Part II, the directions stated "intended to be used" instead of "was used."

Procedure for Data Collection

The steps in the data collection procedure were the following:

1. A random number generating feature of APL was used to select the sample of 23 schools.

2. Approval to administer the questionnaire in the selected schools was obtained from the Operations Branch of the Atlanta Public Schools.

3. The questionnaire was administered to research personnel and distributed to the principals and teachers. The questionnaires for the principals and teachers were sent through school mail to their work sites. The package of questionnaires was sent to the attention of the principal with an accompanying letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting the principal's cooperation in completing a questionnaire and in distributing the questionnaires to the teachers. Each questionnaire for teachers was accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participation. Letters to the respondents assured them of confidentiality — that all data would be reported in group format with no attempt to identify school or individual respondents.

4. Follow-up telephone calls were made to principals who had not returned completed questionnaires. A second supply of questionnaires was mailed to two schools that reported that the first supply of questionnaires was not received.

5. Data from the completed questionnaires were compiled and analyzed.

Research Design

This study conducted in the Atlanta Public School System, was a descriptive survey with a one-time administration of the questionnaire. It involved two groups of

participants, the producers of the services (research personnel) and the consumers of the services (principals and teachers). This study was subjected to the limitations imposed by self-report data and the fact that the respondents were from one school system.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the returned questionnaires were analyzed by the researcher using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Brent, 1975) as follows:

1. A frequency distribution was obtained for respondents by categories — research personnel, principals, teachers, teachers on the leadership team, and teachers not on the leadership team to show a description of respondents by educational levels and years of experience.
2. For the items in Part II of the questionnaire, the Subprogram CROSSTABS was used to display for each service the distribution of responses as to the purpose(s) for which the information was used by the consumer respondents and the purpose(s) for which it was intended to be used by the producer respondents.
3. The SPSS Subprogram Chi-square statistic was applied to the frequency distributions of the type of information and purpose for which it was used by the consumer respondents and the producer respondents to determine if there was a statistically significant relation among the responses by the two groups. The level of statistical significance chosen was .05.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Question 1: "For what purposes did the consumer use the information disseminated from the services provided by REDP?"

The largest number of consumers indicated the information was used from each of the 25 services as follows:

- To assign students — Service #2 (Provide a listing of students eligible for participating in special projects).
- To group students — Service #19 (Provide test scores for students new to the school).

- To set goals and objectives — Service #1 (Publish annual school report which reflects opinion of faculty regarding faculty and student progress of the past year and reports other data), Service #5 (Evaluate special activities and projects), Service #6 (Assist faculty in developing school plan for achieving systemwide objectives), Service #7 (Report accomplishment of activities identified in the school's objective plan), and Service #15 (Assist faculty in projecting academic achievement gain for the year).
- To assess instructional needs — Service #4 (Evaluate effectiveness of such programs as math, reading, and composition), Service #7 (Report accomplishment of activities identified in the school's objective plan), Service #8 (Assist faculty in developing procedures for assessing needs regarding instructional implementation of reading and math components), Service #13 (Assist faculty in determining areas of instructional weakness and in designing appropriate plans to strengthen those areas), Service #17 (Suggest instruments for diagnosing students' instructional needs), Service #22 (Assist individual teachers in determining appropriate test level assignments), and Service #24 (Analyze and interpret test results).
- To improve student performance — Service #18 (Provide longitudinal test data on pupils), Service #20 (Aid faculty in designing teacher-made tests), Service #21 (Conduct faculty workshops on test-taking skills), Service #23 (Provide information regarding proper testing procedures), and Service #25 (Provide practice test materials).
- To update ideas/strategies — Service #3 (Provide literature searches regarding special interests), Service #10 (Provide staff development to promote better utilization of data and findings), Service #11 (Involve members of faculty in implementing systemwide research/evaluation projects), Service #14 (Help faculty with using an instructional management system), and Service #16 (Assist faculty in designing mini-studies to explore the implications of data trends).
- To communicate with parents — Service #9 (Explain federal, state, and foundation guidelines for special projects) and Service #12 (Assist faculty with developing parental involvement activities).

These data show that some purposes were served most often by multiple services. To assess instructional needs, information from seven services (4, 7, 8, 13, 17, 22, and 24) was used. To set goals and objectives, information from five services (1, 5, 6, 7, and 15) was used. Information from five services (3, 10, 11, 14, and 16) was used to update

ideas/strategies. Information from five services (18, 20, 21, 23, and 25) was used most often to improve student performance. To communicate with parents, information from two services (9 and 12) was used. For two purposes, assign students and group students, information from only one service each (2 and 19, respectively) was used. Information from all services was used for one purpose or another.

Question 2: "Did the purposes for which the consumers used the information correspond to the purposes for which the producers intended it to be used?"

The purposes for which the consumers used the information from all 25 services corresponded to the purposes for which the producers intended it to be used. For each service the producers and consumers agreed upon the main purpose(s) for which the information was intended to be and was used. However, on four services, the additional purposes which the producers and the consumers indicated that the services could be used or was used differed. The services for which there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses were as follows:

Service #19 — Provide test scores for students new to the school.

Service #21 — Conduct faculty workshops on test-taking skills.

Service #22 — Assist individual teachers in determining individual test levels.

Service #23 — Provide information regarding proper testing procedures.

Question 3: "Which items of information did the consumers use most often and for what purposes?"

In each instance, some of the consumers indicated that information from the 25 services was used across all purposes. However, according to the number of consumers indicating that they used the information from a service and the number of purposes chosen, the services which seemingly were most applicable across purposes were as follows:

Service #4 — Evaluate effectiveness of such programs as math, reading, and composition.

Service #6 — Assist faculty in developing school plan for achieving systemwide objectives.

Service #13 — Assist faculty in determining areas of instructional weakness and in designing appropriate plans to strengthen those areas.

The converse of most often used services is services not used by the largest number of consumers. The service for which the largest number of consumers indicated that the

information was not used was Service #3 — Provide literature searches regarding special interests. The reason for not using this service was "Unaware: Did not know the service was available."

Unaware that the service was available was the reason given most often by the teacher subgroup of consumers for most of the services not used. The principals indicated most often that they were aware of the service but did not use it.

Conclusions

The producers and consumers were in agreement on the main purpose(s) for the use of the information from each of the 25 services provided by the Division of REDP. The pattern of response for the three top choices of purposes for actual and intended use of information was similar. The disparity between intended and and actual use could be attributed to the consumers using the information for other additional purposes than those which the producers intended it to be used. For example, 10 percent and 22 percent of the consumers indicated that test scores for students new to the school were used also to to update ideas/strategies, and to set goals and objectives, respectively; while none and about 11 percent of the producers indicated that this information could be used for those purposes. Likewise, regarding the other three services on which there was a statistically significant difference in distribution of responses, none and about 6 percent (one) of the producers indicated a purpose other than the main purpose for use of the information, while 10 percent or more of the consumers indicated that the information was used for purposes other than the main purpose(s). The four services for which there was a statistically significant difference all pertained to testing.

Information from each of the 25 services was used. However, some services were more applicable (served more purposes) than others. Those services were as follows:

Service #4 — Evaluate effectiveness of such programs as math, reading, and composition.

Service #6 — Assist faculty in developing school plan for achieving systemwide objectives.

Service #13 — Assist faculty in determining areas of instructional weakness and in designing appropriate plans to strengthen those areas.

One service (#3 — Provide literature searches regarding special interests) was the least applicable, apparently because almost 50 percent of the consumers were not aware that it was an available service.

The services provided by the Division of REDP served the purposes for which the consumers needed information. Only two purposes were met by only one service each, and other purposes were met by at least two services with one purpose being met by seven services.

Implications

Principals are aware of services provided by the division. In cases where the services were not used, the principal perhaps perceived the question to be referring to whether it was used by the principal when the information was primarily applicable to use by the teacher in the classroom. In such cases where the principal indicated "aware/did not use," the teachers indicated that the information was used.

Many teachers as they remain with the school system receive experience as members of the leadership teams. It seems that few teachers in the first five years of tenure are assigned to the leadership teams as often as teachers who have more years of experience. This implication was drawn from the fact that leadership team teachers had longer tenure of service than did nonleadership team teachers.

The availability of some services is communicated more to the principal than to the teachers. Only one principal indicated unawareness of as many as 12 services. The seven services for which more than one principal indicated unawareness were those which are not given high priority by the Division.

In general, consumers will use information if they are aware of its availability. All services were used. Those which had the lowest percent of responses as to use were the ones which the consumers indicated "unaware." There is evidence of communication and collaboration between the personnel within the Division of REDP and the users of information to the extent that their needs as users are being met.

Some services perhaps provide duplicate information or information which serves purposes which otherwise have been met. Likewise, there are some services which do not produce information of a level of importance that would limit the effectiveness of the Division in serving consumers if the service were eliminated.

Recommendations

While the findings of this study are particularized to the Atlanta Public Schools' Division of REDP, the liaison relationship utilized by the Division seems to be effective in fostering communication between the evaluators and their clients. Other urban school system R & E units wherein the collaboration and communication between the evaluators

and their clients are weak should consider the feasibility of such a model for the delivery of R & E services.

The usefulness of information provided by R & E units is influenced by the value the user perceives of it, therefore, it is recommended that further inquiry be made to determine the user's opinion of the appropriateness of the format, the readability, the content, and the longitudinal aspects of the information which is provided.

The use of a questionnaire was expedient and yielded valuable information; however, the use of the interview technique in similar research efforts perhaps would improve the quality of the information and insight gained from such a study. Through a structured interview, the possibility of misinterpretation of the intent of a question would be reduced.

The Atlanta Public Schools' Division of REDP as well as other school system R & E units should continue to be concerned with stimulating and guiding the consumers to use the information provided by (1) exploring the best ways of disseminating information; (2) involving teachers and principals in planning activities and discussions regarding services and use of information; and (3) making reports interesting, informative, and readable. Further, reexamination of R & E services to reveal whether there is duplication of efforts should be meaningful to R & E units in determining whether purposes that are served by multiple services could be adequately met by fewer services.

The four services for which there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution pertained to testing. In general, the consumers did not utilize the information as intended. It is possible that a difference in the test orientation of the two groups was reflected in their responses. Therefore, it is recommended that the researchers dialogue more extensively with the consumers regarding the applicability of test data in making instructional decisions.

The assignment of research assistants/associates in a liaison function to schools places the responsibility of encouraging the appropriate use of data on the assigned person. Consequently, a continuing program of inservice training for its staff to aid new staff members to use proven procedures for serving the consumers and to assist all members in renewing their understandings and skills so that all consumers are receiving appropriate orientation of available services should be a commitment of any R & E unit.

Some information such as a list of students eligible for special projects or test scores of students new to a school is a byproduct of other services and does not require additional cost. Therefore, even though such information serves primarily one purpose the Division should continue to provide the information for the school because it is needed and it would be time consuming for schools to retrieve it from other sources.

The Division of REDP should focus more attention on specifying to teachers as well as to principals the services available, the information provided, and the specific purposes for which it is intended to be used. This focus should include follow-up services to ensure that information has been used for specified purposes.

In the event of budgetary constraints, the Division of REDP should weigh the importance of information in terms of number of purposes served, whether the purpose needs more information than one service provides, and whether the purpose which is served by a single service is of such that the service is merited and whether there is a cost factor involved to determine if there are services which could be eliminated without detriment to the needs of the school consumers.

In summary, the findings of this study indicated that the Division of REDP is meeting the needs of its consumers and has a service delivery model which fosters communication between the evaluators and its clients. However, it is incumbent upon this Division as well as other urban school system R & E units to continue to seek means to improve the use of information provided to clients. Further, to keep abreast of changing and unmet needs, R & E units must continue to obtain from their clients information which articulates specific needs on a regular basis.

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